

Dear Elector,

## Sheerness Community Governance Review - Further Consultation

I am writing to let you know the result of the questionnaire, which asked electors in your area 'should Sheerness have a town council?' and to advise you of the next stage of the review.

Swale Borough Council sent out 7995 leaflets and questionnaires and wrote to 987 properties (where no electors were registered). The review was also promoted on our website and it was drawn to the attention of interested parties.

The response to the consultation was as follows:

- There were 1978 responses to the questionnaire.
  - 1406 said yes, Sheerness should have a town council.
  - 569 said no, Sheerness should not have a town council.
  - There were 3 questionnaires where it was not clear whether their choice was yes or no.
  - Of the yes responses, there were 10 people who voted yes but their comments implied no (i.e. they supported having a town council but do not wish to pay an additional precept).
- Minster Parish Council also responded in support of setting up a town council for Sheerness.

### **The results of the consultation were considered by the Council at its meeting on 21 March 2018, and the Council agreed the following.**

- (1) That Council notes the consultation response to the Community Governance Review.*
- (2) That given the consultation responses, the following draft recommendations be agreed for further consultation:*
  - (a) that a new parish area is created for Sheerness (this is to be the same areas as the borough ward of Sheerness);*
  - (b) that the new parish area should have a parish council;*
  - (c) that the new parish council should be an alternative style and be known as Sheerness Town Council;*
  - (d) that Sheerness Town Council comprises of 9 Members, with the first elections to take place in May 2019.*
- (3) That in making draft recommendations, the Council considers that the establishment of the Town Council would meet the criteria in the Local Governance and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, in that it will be reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area, and effective and convenient, and will have a positive impact on community cohesion.*

**The Council is required to notify interested persons of the draft recommendations, which is the purpose of this letter. To summarise, there was a clear view from those who responded in favour of setting up a town council. It is suggested that if a town council is set up, there should be nine councillors, but a final decision has not been made.**

The Council will be considering this further at the Council meeting on 13 June 2018 when it will be making a decision on whether to set up a Town Council in your area.

**You still have an opportunity to make comments until 21 May 2018, in the following ways:**

- By email [cgrconsultations@swale.gov.uk](mailto:cgrconsultations@swale.gov.uk)
- By writing to **Democratic Services, Swale Borough Council, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT**

You can find out more information about the review here [www.swale.gov.uk/sheerness-cgr](http://www.swale.gov.uk/sheerness-cgr)

The following is an extract from the leaflet previously sent to you, and sets out information on what a town council is, what difference it can make, what a town council could do, and how much it could cost. The Town Council would be in addition to Swale Borough Council.

### What is a town council?

A town council is:

- a statutory body with certain duties and legal powers, and is the first tier of local government closest to its community. There are over 9,000 town and parish councils in England.
- made up of elected individuals who represent the local community, and provides an additional voice to represent the community.
- paid for by increasing the council tax.

### What difference could a town council make?

Town councils, like parish councils, have the power to provide some facilities themselves, or they can contribute to their provision by others.

Town councils can provide a focus for representing local issues and identity, and are also consulted on planning applications in their area. They can also apply for grants and loans and have powers under the Localism Act 2011.

You currently have a local MP, county councillors and borough councillors.

A town council's powers and responsibilities are limited and it could not replace the borough council or the county council.

### What do town councils do?

There are large variations in the services provided by town councils, but they can provide, maintain or contribute to services in their community.

For example:

- ✓ Providing allotments
- ✓ Providing bus shelters
- ✓ Supporting local crime prevention initiatives
- ✓ Local highway matters such as street lighting and maintenance of roadside verges
- ✓ Village halls/community centres
- ✓ Local youth projects
- ✓ Car parks
- ✓ Community safety schemes
- ✓ Litter bins
- ✓ Parks and open spaces
- ✓ Street cleaning
- ✓ Provision of community transport schemes
- ✓ Sport and recreation facilities
- ✓ Tourism

### How much will it cost?

Swale Borough Council would set up any new town council, but the town council itself would then be responsible for meeting all its expenditure, including the cost of premises, staffing and providing services.

Town councils are funded through a charge added to your council tax, which is known as a precept. This is an additional amount that is collected with your council tax. Town councils set their own precept, and it will vary depending on what money it needs to maintain and improve services and facilities in the local community.

As an indication, the additional cost of existing town and parish councils in Swale currently ranges between £15.05 and £83.54 per year for a band D property, which is an average of £40, or 77 pence per week for each household. There are two town councils in the borough, Faversham and Queenborough, and the precepts for those are £53.06 for Faversham Town Council and £83.54 for Queenborough Town Council.

You can view information about individual precepts for town and parish councils for 2017/18 via our website: [www.swale.gov.uk/sheerness-cgr](http://www.swale.gov.uk/sheerness-cgr)

### Are there similar organisations already?

There is a Sheerness Town Team that operates in the area, but this differs considerably from a town council, particularly as it is not democratically elected.

### How many councillors would the new town council have and how would they be elected?

The legislation provides that the minimum number of elected members on a town council shall not be less than five. There is no maximum number. If a town council is set up, the first elections to the town council would be held on 2 May 2019. The term of office of a town councillor is four years.

